



Being "Sunsible" - The No Burn Zone

With the right precautions, kids can safely play in the sun. Here are the most effective strategies:

Avoid the Strongest Rays of the Day

This is when it's highest overhead and therefore the strongest (normally from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM in the northern hemisphere). Even on cloudy, cool or overcast days, UV rays travel through the clouds. This "invisible sun" can cause unexpected sunburn.



Cover Up

One of the best ways to protect your family from the sun is to cover up. To ensure that clothes will screen out harmful UV rays check by placing your hand inside the garments and making sure you can't see it through them.

Infants have thinner skin and underdeveloped melanin. This allows their skin to burn more easily. If your infant must be in the sun, dress him or her in clothing that covers the body, including hats with wide brims to shadow the face. Use an umbrella to create shade.

Even older kids need to escape the sun. Long exposure can make them feel tired and irritable. For all-day, outdoor affairs bring along a wide umbrella or a pop-up tent to play in. If it's not too hot outside and won't make your child even more uncomfortable, you can have him or her wear a light long-sleeved shirt and/or long pants.



Use Sunscreen Consistently

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends that all children (over 6 months and regardless of their skin tone) wear sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher to **prevent both sunburn and tanning**. Remember that tanning is also a sign of sun damage and that dark-skinned children can also develop painful sunburns.

Choose a sunscreen that states on the label that it protects against both UVA and UVB rays. This is referred to as "broad-spectrum" sunscreen.

To avoid possible skin allergy avoid sunscreens with PABA. If your child has sensitive skin, look for a product with the active ingredient titanium dioxide (a chemical-free block).

Sunscreen should **not** be applied to babies under 6 months of age so they absolutely must be kept out of the sun whenever possible.

For sunscreen to do its job, it must be applied correctly. Be sure to:

- Apply sunscreen whenever your child will be in the sun. Apply about 30 minutes before they go outside so that a good layer of protection can form. Don't forget about lips, hands, ears, feet, shoulders and behind the neck. Lift up bathing suit straps and apply sunscreen underneath them (in case the straps shift as a child moves).
- Don't try to stretch out a bottle of sunscreen. Apply generously.
- Reapply sunscreen often, approximately every 2 to 3 hours.
- Apply a waterproof sunscreen if kids will be around water or swimming. Water reflects and intensifies the sun's rays so kids need protection that lasts. Waterproof sunscreens may last up to 80 minutes in the water. Be sure to reapply sunscreen when kids come out of the water.



Use Protective Eyewear for Kids

Sun exposure damages the eyes as well as the skin. Cumulative exposure can lead to cataracts. The best way to protect eyes is to wear sunglasses. But not all sunglasses provide the same level of ultraviolet protection. Purchase sunglasses with labels ensuring that they provide 100% UV protection.



Not all kids enjoy wearing sunglasses. To encourage them to wear them let kids select a style they like. And don't forget that kids want to be like grown-ups. If you wear sunglasses regularly your kids may be willing to follow your example.

Double-Check Medications

Some medications (**both prescription and over-the-counter**) increase the skin's sensitivity to UV rays. Be sure to ask your pharmacist about any meds your child takes (especially antibiotics and acne medicines).

Remember even sunscreen can't always protect skin from sun sensitivity caused by medications so the best protection may be to cover up or stay indoors.

Any questions call Chouteau County Public Health and ask to speak to a Public Health Nurse.

Chouteau County Public Health Department
406-622-3771

